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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005784

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TALES OF CORRUPTION CIRCULATE AROUND AMMAN

REF: AMMAN 5131

Classified By: DCM David M. Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: Amman is rife with rumors of high-level manipulation and alleged official corruption, with stories of a multi-million dollar theft of royal jewelry in shipment from Europe and a multi-layered Kuwait oil deal that gives Palace and GID slush funds -- not just the Treasury -- part of the proceeds. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) The mingling of private ventures with public business -- a Jordanian field sport -- has become a major topic of conversation in Amman. The leaking and sale of parts of the high school Tawjihi exam by officials in the Ministry of Education (ref) demonstrated that even small fry can get in on the act. More potently, the King (and Queen) are under increased scrutiny, with private charges of corruption -- or, at least, lavish spending and less than proper accounting. Danish news organizations recently reported the theft in transit of USD 2 million worth of jewelry and silver that Queen Rania allegedly purchased in Sweden. The local press has not yet picked up the story (and probably never will), but the story fuels private commentary on the Queen's out of control lifestyle.

[13.](#) (C) The most frequent gossip, however, has centered on Jordan's recently leaked "secret" oil deal with Kuwait (septel). Businessmen, academics, former ministers, and even prominent MPs privately accuse the GOJ of structuring the deal with Kuwait to provide a portion of the sale of Kuwaiti oil directly into the Palace (and, in some versions, GID) coffers, with only part going to the Treasury. One prominent businessman (indirectly) blamed the King for this alleged corruption, saying "King Hussein would never have done this." The businessman continued by lamenting the existence of several off-budget -- and therefore unaccountable -- pots of money in the GOJ, including the Palace, GID, and Planning Ministry. "The King and Queen do wonderful things for Jordan abroad," he argued, "but need to be more careful of what they do for us here at home."

[14.](#) (C) These are only the most credible of the recent stories of perceived misdeeds making the rounds in Amman. It may be that, following the transfer of authority in Iraq and general acceptance of the state of the peace process, Jordanians are having to look closer to home to find topics of interest. Such grumbling here tends to be cyclical, and we do not believe that it will have any meaningful political impact. However, these stories reinforce prevailing assumptions about corruption in high places and contribute to a perception of a disconnect between the King and people.

[15.](#) (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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